



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Fund

Rhinos and tigers are among the most charismatic and endangered species on earth. Despite protection from commercial exploitation afforded under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and the U.S. Endangered Species Act, rhinos and tigers continue to decline throughout much of their range.

Concern over their decline prompted increased support for their protection in recent years, and stricter controls on the sale and trade of rhino and tiger products.

To strengthen on-the-ground conservation for these species, the U.S. Congress passed the Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Act of 1994 (amended in 1998). The Act established the

Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Fund (Fund), a competitive grants program providing resources to support conservation activities.

Congress created the Fund to strengthen habitat and ecosystem management, develop protected areas, support surveys and monitoring, and increase resources for anti-poaching efforts, wildlife inspection and forensic work. The Fund also supports education efforts to increase public awareness of the plight of these creatures, decrease conflicts between them and humans, and encourage use of substitutes for their body parts and by-products in traditional medicine.

The Fund seeks to strengthen conservation activities of range countries since the ultimate survival of the



*Amur Tiger*  
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rhinoceros and tiger rests with the managers, scientists, and local communities of these countries. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) works to achieve the objectives of the Fund by developing partnerships with natural resource agencies, academic institutions, local community groups, government and non-government entities, and any other organization committed to partnering for the benefit of the world's remaining wild tigers and rhinos in Asia and Africa. Such collaboration has strengthened projects and leveraged matching funds. During 2001 and 2002, the Service received 172 proposals and awarded 64 grants totaling \$1,645,894 in 18 countries, leveraging more than \$3,449,000 in matching funds and in-kind contributions.

The following projects are examples of efforts supported by the Fund for the continued survival of these species.

#### ***Sumatran Rhino***

The Sumatran rhino is critically endangered. Approximately 300 survive in Indonesia and Malaysia. All major populations are being protected against excessive poaching by the deployment of anti-poaching units. The Fund supported these units at most sites essential to survival of the species. Intensified protection has slowed the decline, and the world population is stabilizing. Continued support for effective anti-poaching efforts is critical to survival of this species.

#### ***Javan Rhino***

The Javan rhino, known only to reside in Ujung Kulon National Park, Indonesia, and Cat Tien National Park, Vietnam, is the most rare of all rhino species with approximately 60 individuals currently surviving in the wild. There are no Javan rhinos in captivity. At Ujung Kulon, the Fund supported anti-poaching units and identification of critical conservation needs. At Cat Tien National Park, the Fund supported status surveys, an awareness program for children and their parents living on the fringe of the park, and an evaluation of the Vietnamese rhino conservation strategy. At both

parks, the Fund supports studies on population dynamics through DNA analysis of rhino dung.

#### ***Indian Rhino***

The Indian rhino numbers approximately 2,400. Increasing human populations and poverty within communities surrounding protected areas, coupled with the great commercial value of Indian rhino horn, have resulted in significant poaching in India and Nepal. In the northeast Indian state of Assam, the Fund provided field equipment to forest guards protecting rhinos, supported conservation education for villagers, facilitated construction of anti-poaching camps, and strengthened prosecution of rhino poaching cases. The Fund also supported the translocation of rhinos between parks in Nepal to strengthen newly established populations.

#### ***Black Rhino***

Originally found throughout most of Sub-Saharan Africa (excluding the Congo Basin), the world's black rhinoceros population plummeted from an estimated 100,000 animals in the 1960s to approximately 2,600 today, due to uncontrolled market hunting. Poaching for rhino horn remains the chief threat to survival of the four subspecies of black rhino. Therefore, the Fund equipped and trained state and state-sanctioned antipoaching ranger forces to improve security at national parks, nature reserves, and privately owned conservancies in South Africa, Kenya, and Tanzania. In addition, to manage individual and metapopulation-level black rhinoceroses for maximum population growth, the Fund supported ear notching coupled with ground-based monitoring methods in South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Kenya, and Tanzania.

#### ***White Rhino***

The two subspecies of white rhinoceros also declined rapidly due to unregulated market hunting. Attempts to restore white rhino populations have been more successful than efforts on behalf of black rhinos. White rhinos number close to 11,600 individuals. The largest number

(98.9%) are the southern subspecies of the white rhino mostly in South Africa. The northern subspecies is severely endangered with only 30 individuals in Garamba National Park, Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Fund supported protection, metapopulation management, and applied research into fetal white rhino loss to rehabilitate as many populations over the largest habitat areas as quickly as possible.

#### ***Tiger***

The tiger has five remaining subspecies totalling 5,000 to 7,500 animals in the wild. They are scattered in populations from India to Vietnam, and in Sumatra, China, and the Russian Far East. Commercial poaching, a declining prey base due to over hunting, and loss of habitat are principal threats.

The Fund supported assessments of tigers, for example in the globally significant Sundarbans river swamp of Bangladesh. It also strengthened enforcement of laws protecting tigers by supporting training for former Cambodian hunters patrolling wildlife areas outside parks and by informing local people of laws protecting tigers and other wildlife. The Fund encouraged transboundary conservation efforts, such as expanding the present range of the Amur tiger in the Russian Far East into adjacent habitat in China. Conservation education supported by the Fund included ecology camps for children living next to important tiger habitats in Nepal.

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**February 2003**